BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL

art and story by

HIROAKI SAMURA

translation by

DANA LEWIS and TOREN SMITH

lettering and retouch by

TOMOKO SAITO

CAST OF CHARACTERS

MANJI
Immortal *ninin*

RIN
Last heir of the Mutenichi *ryū dojō* destroyed by Ittō ryū

MAGATSU
Former Ittō *ryū* swordsman

SHIRA
Terrifyingly sadistic Akagi assassin

THE STORY SO FAR

Infected by *kessenchu* mystical bloodworms which can heal all wounds and grant their host immortality Manji is bloodthirsty led to the capture and murder of his sister To atone for the 100 good people who died at his hand under his corrupted lord Manji vowed to slay 1,000 evil men in exchange for the release of death

Two years earlier, when her parents were murdered on her fourteenth birthday by Anotsu Kagehisa's Ittō-*ryū* swordsmen Rin Asano became part of a mad revenge cycle which began when Anotsu's grandfather was thrown out of the Asano clan's Mutenichi *ryū dōjō* fifty years before A quest for vengeance was instilled in Anotsu a similar quest now haunts Rin Upon learning of Manji she enlisted his aid to destroy the Ittō *ryū* and avenge her parents

Last issue

When we last saw Magatsu and Shira they were just about to conclude a very tough battle to the death For a while it's seemed as if he might be joining his dead lover in the afterlife but somehow Magatsu found some extra will combined that with his country boy instinct and drove the surprised Shira backward to the edge of a cliff from which he now hangs by his one remaining hand That hand has only one thing to hang on to— the handle of a sword buried deep in Magatsu's chest Things are looking grim for the one-handed violence freak

designer DEBRA BAILEY assistant editor MICHAEL CARRIGLITTO editor TIM ERVIN-GORE publisher MIKE RICHARDSON

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無限の住人

FALL FROST

– part six –

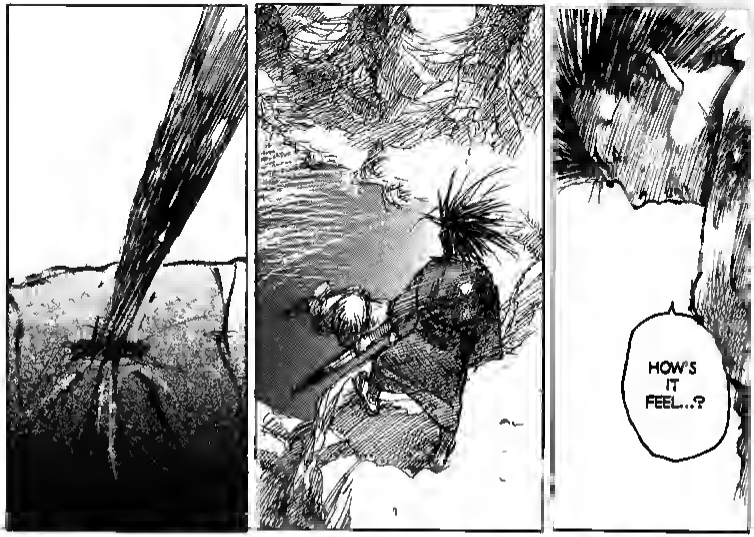
AAA...

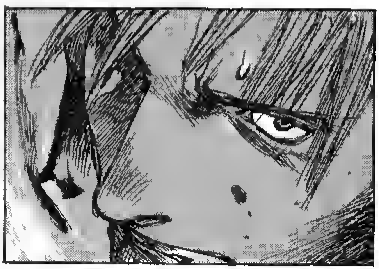
?!

GGG

HRGG...
!?

GOOD
MOVE.


HOW'S IT FEEL...?
YOUR *LIFE* IN SOMEONE ELSE'S *HANDS! WELL?!* HOW DO *YOU* LIKE IT?!
NOTHING YOU CAN DO!



COME ON. *BEG* FOR MERCY.
HEH... IF YOU'RE A *REAL* BAD GUY, *ACT* LIKE ONE.

SCREAM FOR IT! LET O-REN HEAR YOU ON THE OTHER SIDE!

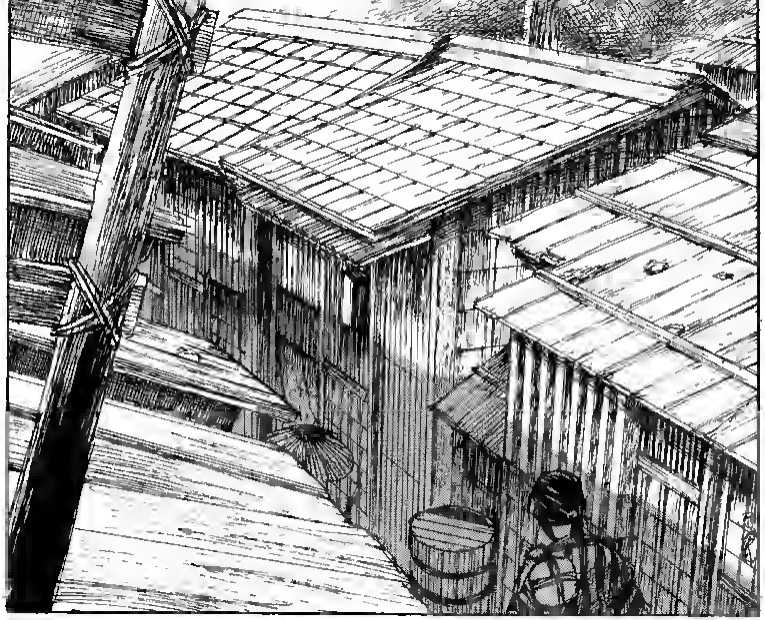
GUESS WHAT, ASSHOLE? I WON'T BEG. AND I WON'T LET GO.
REAL "BAD GUYS" NEVER GIVE UP, YOU DUMBASS!
"ACCEPTING YOUR FATE"... WHAT BULLSHIT!
THAT'S LIKE ADMITTING YOU LOST!
SO DON'T GIVE ME THAT CRAP!
ME?! GIVE UP FOR A PUNK LIKE YOU?!

NO FRIGGIN' WAY, MAN! I'M GOING DOWN FIGHTING!
KICK AND YELL AND SCREAM UNTIL I WIN. THAT'S HOW I LIKE IT!
BET YOU'D BE TOO PROUD TO DO THAT, WOULDN'T YOU?
EH?! ITTŌ-RYŪ DUDE?
GO ON... CHOP IT!

RIGHT NOW I JUST DON'T GOT THE STRENGTH TO PULL MYSELF UP ONE-HANDED.
PISSES ME OFF... BUT...
BUT AS LONG AS I'VE GOT MY HAND... EVEN IF I FALL, MAN...
...I'LL CRAWL BACK UP AND TAKE YOUR HEAD!
SCARY, HUH? HUH?!
I CAN'T STOP YOU NOW!
IF YOU'RE SCARED, CUT IT OFF!

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
HEH, HEH
MANJI GETS MY RIGHT HAND! YOU GET MY LEFT! DOUBLE THE HATE, MAN!
GYAH HAH HAH HAH HAH!

TWO GUYS I HATE ENOUGH TO BUTCHER!
DAMN... NEVER FELT THAT BEFORE! SO HOW DOES IT FEEL...?
GEH HEH HEH...
FILLS ME WITH JOY, MAN! PURE FRIGGIN' JOY!!
BWA HA HA HA HA HA...!



OUCH!
HOLY SHIT!
WHAT ARE YOU PUTTING ON ME, DOC?!
I SAID DON'T MOVE, YOUNG'N!
HAW HAW HAW HAW!

HE'S A LUCKY FELLER.
POKED FULL OF HOLES, AND NOT A' ONE OF THEM FATAL.
YOU KNOW, MAGATSU... IN THE GOOD OLD DAYS, BUSHI WERE ASHAMED TO GET THAT CHOPPED UP...
WHAT?! LOOK WHO'S TALKING !?
YOU CALL THAT BLOODY RAG A KIMONO, MANJI?!
SO, ANYWAY... WHY SO GLUM?
YOU NAILED YOUR LADY'S KILLER... RIGHT?
YEAH...
IT'S NOTHING. ONLY...
MAYBE THAT BASTARD WAS RIGHT. MAYBE O-REN WOULD HAVE BEEN HAPPIER IF I DIED AND WENT TO HER SIDE.

WELL, WHATEVER. IN ANY CASE...
...IT'S THE END OF THE ROAD FOR ONE *CREEPY* DUDE, ANYWAY.
I SURE DIDN'T EXPECT THOSE THREE STOOGES.
SLOWED ME DOWN, BUT AT LEAST I DIDN'T HAVE TO DEAL WITH SHIRA. THANKS, KID.
SPEAKING OF WHICH, MANJI...
CHANGE OF *PLANS*. AS SOON AS THESE WOUNDS CLOSE...
...I'M HEADING FOR *KAGA*.

SHIRA LET SLIP SOMETHING ABOUT THE BOSS.
SO I GOTTA CHECK IT OUT. HE MAY NEED--
"BOSS," IS IT? THAT'S FUNNY.
THOUGHT YOU SAID YOU QUIT THE ITTŌ-RYŪ.
I QUIT, ALL RIGHT. BUT...
AS A HUMAN BEING, I HAVE TO--
I DID.
YOU'RE RIGHT.
BWA HAHAHA!
GIMME A BREAK! "HUMAN BEING"...?!
MANJI...
ONE OF THESE DAYS, I'M GOING TO WRAP MY FINGERS AROUND YOUR MISERABLE THROAT AND STRANGLE YOU!
FINE. LAUGH ALL YOU WANT.
BUT IF YOU AND I MEET AGAIN, IN KAGA MAYBE, AND ANOTSU'S THERE...?

I'LL PROBABLY SIDE WITH HIM.
SO JUST REMEMBER THAT, OKAY?
...
NEO!
GOODBYE PRESENT.
AND BODY-GUARD FEE.

WITH SIX RYŌ, YOU CAN COVER THE DOCTOR, FOOD... WHATEVER YOU NEED, LONG AS YOU WANT.
PATCH UP THAT BOD OF YOURS, KID. GO FIND YOUR FRIEND.
MANJI... YOU'RE A GOOD GUY.
NAW... I JUST SHOOK DOWN THE THREE STOOGES WHILE YOU WERE AFTER SHIRA.
WHAT?! YOU WERE SCORING! WHILE I WAS FIGHTING FOR MY LIFE?!
HEY, I GAVE YOU HALF, DIDN'T I?
GODDAMN SNOT-NOSED PUNK!! THIS CASH DIDN'T JUST FALL INTO MY HANDS, YOU KNOW!
BUT THANKS TO THAT, KAGA JUST GOT A WHOLE LOT CLOSER.
GOD KNOWS HOW LONG IT'D TAKE TO TRUDGE THERE. BUT WITH THIS...
I CAN HIRE A PALANQUIN, SO...FOUR DAYS MAX.

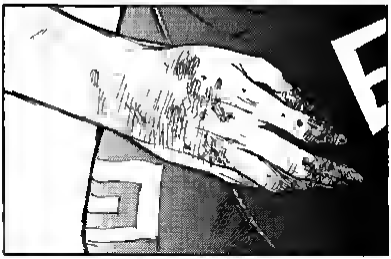
JUST DON'T CROAK BEFORE I GET THERE, RIN!

FEELS LIKE I'M ALL HOLLOW INSIDE...
NOTHING TO DRINK BUT POND WATER, SO I GOT THE RUNS... YUCK.
THREE...? FOUR...?
HOW MANY DAYS SINCE I ATE...?
AM I EVEN HEADED TOWARDS KAGA ANY MORE...?
AND WHERE AM I? I THINK I'M LOST...

TOK
AH?!

IT'S MUKAGO... YOU CAN EAT THAT!

shudder
shudder
huff
shudder



NNGG...
.....
.....
UHGG!
SNORT
hahhh
huff
hahhh

>sniff<
.....
.....
M-MANJI...
TO BE CONTINUED...

LETTERS

send letters to:

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GLOSSARY

bushi A samurai. A member of the warrior class.
Itto-ryu Sword school founded by Anotsu Kagehisa.
mukago A glutinous Japanese yam (*dioscorea japonica*). Edible tubercles (small tubers) grow in the axils of the stem.
ryo A gold piece.

Phew! It's certainly relieving to have that fight be over, isn't it? But there's this itchy feeling that Shira isn't really dead. He may not be able to reattach his limbs, but the guy's resilient! Next thing you know he's going to have a pair of retractable sword/forearms and the same resolve, hunting down two guys—one for each hand. Makes you wonder what color his hair will turn next. Well, let's get to some letters.

Dear Bloody *Blade* Letterz:

I am overjoyed to see, again, one of Hiroaki Samura's masterful fight scenes taking center stage! He has such an amazing ability to shift the story's action DOWN to highlight subplots and characters, and then he just CRANKS the pacing UP to rev us along into a fight scene. Joy! Rapture! I am so pleased to see Manji facing Shira once more. Since Shira's bizarre torturing-prostitutes scenes (*Blade* #'s 33 and 42), every time Shira pops up in this story I get weird heebie-jeebies... and I eagerly anticipate our hero (or heroes) chopping him down!

Much praise to Samura for both his skill at pacing/storytelling and his skill in creating a superb villain that I do indeed "love to hate." And just when I think Samura's certainly surpassed himself with gore and violence (Manji's awkward fighting finale in *The Gathering*—poor Hyakurin's torture scenes after she's captured by those Itto *ryu* bastards), he goes and OUTDOES HIMSELF with Shira's freaky-icky bone spears! What?!? My mind reels! Now my Shira heebie-jeebies are EVEN WORSE! And I LOVE IT!

Thank you, Master Samura, for creeping me out, making me salivate in anticipation of your next issue, and for schoolin' us all in the art of pacing a story. And the gory scenes that you invent.—Jeeperz—I shake, shudder, and enjoy!

Philip Wilson Simon
Portland, Oregon

Manji by Nick Cook
Austin, Texas

It took me all the way to the bottom of this letter to realize it was written by a friend and co-worker here at Dark Horse. I know it might sound funny, but I'm leaving it in for the hell of it. Even if it's just to say "Philip, the next time you write me a letter, it better be farmatted correctly, darn it." But he does make some good points about the pacing of the story and how it benefits character development. And you just can't get around Samura's penchant for icky-ness. It's crazy. Anyway—next!

Hi!

I'm a huge fan of manga and anime, and I was just wondering if there was or will be a *Blade of the Immortal* movie? Thanks, and keep up the good work. Love the comic. It rocks.

Thank you,
Darth Ratliff
via e-mail

To date we've heard nothing of a *Blade of the Immortal* movie. Nor have we heard of any *Blade* anime, or, for that matter *Blade* anything other than the manga and maybe some action figures and art books. But hold on to hope. There's a good chance that samurai splatter cinema will once again be vague, and maybe ...just maybe...

Well, as you might guess, we're going to leave Manji and Shira for a while. Next we'll return to Kaga to see what's up with Anotsu and his dealings with the Shingyotō-*ryū*. There should be plenty of intrigue, politics, jealousy, and beautiful settings. So, enjoy the peace for a little bit, you know it won't last long.

—TimEG

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ABOUT THE SWASTIKA

The main character in *Blade of the Immortal*, Manji, has taken the "crnx gammata" as both his name and his personal symbol. This symbol is also known as the *swastika*, a name derived from the Sanskrit *svastika* (meaning "welfare," from su — "well" + *asti* "he is"). As a symbol of prosperity and good fortune, the swastika was widely used throughout the ancient world (for example, appearing often on Mesopotamian coinage), including North and South America and has been used in Japan as a symbol of Buddhism since ancient times. To be precise, the symbol generally used by Japanese Buddhists is the *sauvastika*, which moves in a counter clockwise direction, and is called the *manji* in Japanese. The *sauvastika* generally stands for night, and often for magical practices. The *swastika*, whose arms point in a clockwise direction, is generally considered a solar symbol. It was this version (the *hakenkreuz*) that was perverted by the Nazis. It is important that readers understand that the swastika has ancient and honorable origins and it is those that apply to this story, which takes place in the 18th century (ca. 1782-3). There is *no anti-Semitic or pro-Nazi meaning behind the use of the symbol in this story. Those meanings did not exist until after 1910.*

ABOUT THE TRANSLATION

The Artwork. The author of *Blade of the Immortal* requested that we make an effort to avoid mirror-imaging his artwork. Normally, all of our manga are first copied in a mirror-image in order to facilitate the left-to-right reading of the pages. However, Mr. Samura decided that he would rather see his pages reversed via the technique of cutting up the panels and repasting them in reverse order. While we feel that this often leads to problems in panel-to-panel continuity, we place primary importance on the wishes of the creator. Therefore, most of *Blade of the Immortal* has been produced using the "cut and paste" technique. There are, of course, some sequences where it was impossible to do this, and mirror-imaged panels or pages were used instead.

The Sound Effects & Dialogue. Since some of Mr. Samura's sound effects are integral parts of the artwork, the decision was made to leave those in their original Japanese. When it was crucial to the understanding of the panel that the sound effect be in English, however, Mr. Samura chose to redraw the panel. We hope readers will view the untouched sound effects as essential portions of Mr. Samura's extraordinary artwork. In addition, Mr. Samura's treatment of dialogue is quite different from that featured in average samurai manga and is considered to be one of the things that has made *Blade* such a huge hit in Japan. Mr. Samura has mixed a variety of lingnistic styles in this fantasy story, where some characters speak in the mannered style of old Japan, while others speak as if they were street-corner punks from a bad area of modern-day Tokyo. The anachronistic slang used by some of the characters in the English translation reflects the unusual mix of speech patterns from the original Japanese text.

NEXT ISSUE:

"The Wind and The Heron"

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BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL

art and story by

HIROAKI SAMURA

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Immortal Scanner

Nice enough to distro the stuff

THE STORY SO FAR

- Series: Blade of the Immortal
- Date: 2003.08.27
- Volume: 12
- Chapter: 078
- Format: Left to Right
- pages: 00-27 (28 jpgs w/cover)
- Size: 8.28MB
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- Last Rls: Botl Issue 77

Sorry, for the delay 79 won't be scanned next, 80 will since, 79 has already been scanned.

ENJOY!